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ABSTRACT

Learning alternatives available for seniors at a New York high school provide options to the regular senior year of studies via departmental electives. Nine ongoing programs are briefly described. (MLF)

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at

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SESSION - LET'S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK

AT THE TWELFTH GRADE YEAR

by Richard N. Suprina

Principal

Hauppauge High School

Hauppauge, New York

EA 009 278

It is a pleasure to be with Rev. Bray and Bill Garner and all of you today and to have this opportunity to share ideas about educational options available to us in our quest toward making the senior year in high school more rewarding than it currently is for our students.

The NASSP has been actively involved for several years in bringing instructional and educational alternatives for twelfth graders to the forefront in hopes of increasing the myriad of learning opportunities for young people, as well as to minimize the effects of the dreaded disease senioritis. If we are honest with ourselves, senioritis exists to some degree in every school and as administrators we must play a leadership role in negating the debilitating effect that this mental and spiritual feeling has on our students and our schools.

Times have changed in education specifically and in our society in general. In order to truly help the young people placed in our care prepare for the future we must accept the fact that the quality of education must be maintained or improved based on solid traditional values, and while doing that we must provide a variety of growth experiences that will meet the learning and maturation needs of individuals representing the diverse groups that comprise our student body. In my estimation it is not enough to have a house plan which provides one or two options. While this is certainly superior to the lock-step method of every pupil fitting into the same instructional mold, it still leaves a great deal to be desired, for we have many more than two or three types of students in our respective school

constituencies. Young people possessing varying levels of academic ability, personal motivation, parental and peer influence and diverse interests and career goals constitute the bulk of our students. While each of them has the right to expect equality in the basic schooling provided them, they also have a right to expect their educators to work with them as individuals, and in so doing to provide learning options that move away from sameness and flow toward diversity. Please understand, I do not advocate chaotic unstructured programs feeding on a young adult's desire to have a good time or be entertained. Neither do I subscribe to a program of studies that neglects the basic reading, writing, mathematical, etc. skills so necessary for success in our world. The alternatives that we provide at Hauppauge High School are limited due to budget constraints, lack of area mass transportation and philosophical differences within the community that encourage the Board of Education to act more conservatively than we would prefer in certain instances pertaining to educational options. Nevertheless, despite these various restrictions we believe we have built upon the sound foundations of basic educational achievement and have provided some appropriate, beneficial and potentially exciting learning alternatives for those seniors who are so inclined to select one of those choices rather than to complete a regular senior year of studies via departmental electives.

I would now like to explain a few of our senior options knowing full well that some of you may have similar or better programs in your own school, but hoping that some of our reasons for instituting these programs or the methods by which we administer them will give you food for additional thought.

EARLY GRADUATION

A. Three and three and one-half year programs

B. Contracts

C. Reasons - college costs; getting into the job market six months early; college admission often easier; family responsibilities.

D. Give sincerity to it - graduation ceremony

E. Don't be afraid of it - 10% early grads

ALTERNATIVE EVENING STUDIES PROGRAM

A. More structure; less time; for non-college bound

B. Let's them continue their schooling while working

EARLY RELEASE OR LATE ARRIVAL

A. Reasons - work-study program, involvement through Industrial Arts or Business; to attend technical school; on-campus college study; required to support family; working at night; taking care of younger family members so that parents can work; learning a trade; or just earning some spending money.

B. Contracts

C. We believe that if a youngster is happy and fulfilled outside of school that he will generally be more successful in school and will complete at least the requirements needed for graduation. We do have a less than two percent drop-out rate and this program might be one of the reasons. Approximately 30% of the senior class is engaged in this early release or late arrival program to some degree.

INDEPENDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A. Examples - English - newspaper, Math - computer, Science - lab or hospital, Art - gallery, etc.

B. Contracts

C. Reasons - career exploration; on the job experience; awareness of out of school learning

D. Interesting comment - "How can I teach the kid if he is out of school learning?"

E. About 5% of the senior class participates in this program.

EXECUTIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

A. In lieu of a social studies elective

B. Contract covering requirements in government

C. Police; judicial, town, county and state officials

D. An awareness of how society and its government function

E. About 10% of the senior class elect this option.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

A. Reasons - so that we don't hold capable or interested students back; permits us to offer courses through research for which we do not have sufficient numbers of enrollment to schedule a class.

B. Contract

C. Between 5 and 10% participate in independent study programs.

COLLEGE - HIGH SCHOOL ARTICULATION PROGRAM

A. What? - We offer our sixty official college credits to our seniors in our building, taught by our extremely qualified teachers, in affiliation with four universities

B. The courses include the following:

Calculus	English Comic Vision Literature
Principals of Biology	English Tragic Vision Literature
Zoology	Religions of the World
College Accounting	Psychology
Advanced Spanish	American History
Advanced French	Sociology
College Freshman English	Photography
Western Civilization	Cinematography

C. Why? - Seniors stagnating; some not challenged; CLEP and A.P. courses did not provide us with the scope of offerings we desired; the freshman year in college was repetitive of the high school senior year in many cases; more and more students would leave to attend college for part of the day during their senior year; some students unaware of how to succeed in college studies; some pupils did not know if they possessed the ability to do college level work; the cost of going to college was increasing and this work taken at high school might save them money while also giving them advanced standing.

D. Relationships established with four schools. We began with about one hundred students taking college courses in our school three years ago and this year we have almost one half of the senior class taking one or more of these dual credit courses.

E. Additions - Next year we intend to offer the following additional college courses:

Music Theory
Advanced Sociology
The Bible as Literature
Advanced Electronics
Political Science
Latin American Studies - taught in Spanish

All of these are official college courses for which students pay the university fifty dollars for every three credits. In the east, and probably in most areas of the country this is an educational bargain of the highest magnitude. And - to be honest - this program has really brought additional pride to the school and community.

We have also encouraged student travel to Europe to use their language skills and to learn about the culture of a foreign country. Generally this has been done during a winter or spring vacation and while not unique, does provide the students with a change of pace in their learning sequence.

In an effort to make this a broader type of educational experience we have developed a school enchange program with a high school (gymnasium) in Germany and we will be exchanging approximately twenty students for about one month late this spring. The students will attend school in Germany and we hope this will lead to incorporating similar exchange programs with other European countries, as well as Japan.

We are also searching for schools in the continental United States with whom we may cultivate an exchange program that will open up even more horizons for our young people. At a recent National Institute for Secondary School Administrators in St. Louis, I learned about "The National Network of Complementary Schools." These sixteen public and independent schools from Oregon

to St. Croix in the Virgin Islands and New England to Tennessee have organized themselves so that a student may study such topics as the law and stock exchange in New York City or outdoor education and the environment in Colorado. All the student has to do to engage in one or more of these intensive educational alternatives in a school other than his own is to make a suitable request through the administrative office and pay for his own expenses. By using the various talents that schools in diverse locations of the country possess, it seems to me that numerous school exchange networks could be established that could take advantage of those special courses in specific schools for the benefit of intellectually turned-on students from a district or location where the unique course offering would not be a possibility.

In the May, 1974 issue of the Phi Delta Kappan magazine, Professor Maurice Gibbons wrote an article titled, "The Walkabout." Its basis was the six month endurance test faced by adolescent Australian aborigines. His theory is that our North American teenagers are generally evaluated by written examinations that test skills far removed from the actual experiences they will face in real life - solving theoretical problems - rather than the "walkabout" faced by the aborigine that forces the individual to develop skills, knowledge and to explore his inner resources in order to become a successful contributor to the society.

Professor Gibbons suggests educational alternatives be selected that could help a high school senior meet the following five basic challenges:

1. Adventure	A challenge to the student's daring, endurance and skill in an unfamiliar environment.
2. Creativity	A challenge to explore, cultivate and express his own imagination in some aesthetically pleasing form.
3. Service	A challenge to identify a human need for assistance and provide it; to express caring without expectation of reward.
4. Practical	A challenge to explore a utilitarian activity, to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to work in that field and to produce something of use.
5. Logical Inquiry	A challenge to explore one's curiosity, to formulate a question or a problem of personal importance, and to pursue an answer or solution systematically and, wherever appropriate, by investigation.

I seriously doubt if any of us could find it in our hearts or minds to negate the value of that type of practical learning experience. In fact, probably deep down inside, as we think about it, we feel the warmth generated by enthusiasm and the prideful thought, "Oh how I would have loved that challenge when I was in school."

There is no question that the "Walkabout" is an educational alternative for qualified high school students whose time has come. As administrators we must remove the walls and burdens of educational sameness. Those barriers often make our job easier but make unfulfilling the learning experiences of our students. We must strive for a quality and a diversity in our offerings to young people, both inside and outside the school facility, that will prepare them for the challenges of living and clearly prove to them that learning and personal growth go hand in hand, and will continue to do so, every day of one's life.

I have attempted to provide you with information about some of our existing options for seniors at Hauppauge High School and some that we are currently working on to include in our repertoire of educational opportunities. I hope that you can use some of this material and that it will be helpful in your own school setting. Should any of you be interested in possibly establishing a "network" exchange program with us, I would be happy to speak with you at the conclusion of the meeting.

Thank you and best wishes to all of you for a successful spring semester.